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AUTHOR Riley, Judith; Francis, Brian
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ABSTRACT

A study of the efficiency of faculty of the six schools of the Open University of the United Kingdom was conducted through informal interviews. To review methods of developing new packages of course materials, 20 topics were focused upon, and the interviewee was encouraged to talk freely and fully. The interviews may have given the opportunity for exploring frustrations with the present ways of working and to feel their ideas for changes were being taken seriously. The interviews and the discussion of suggestions and questions encouraged the faculty to reconsider their current practice and to take responsibility for improving their own productivity. Most schools seemed to be devoting more effort to manpower planning. The studies of the six schools were followed by reviews of the work of other parts of the University, including the graphic design studio and the computing service. The questions studied by the investigators before interviewing are appended. (SW)

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CAN YOU MAKE FACULTY STAFF MORE EFFICIENT?

Judith Riley and Brian Francis

If you were to ask faculty staff to list the most threatening forms of institutional research, the majority would probably include someone else evaluating the teaching quality of their courses or their efficiency as teachers. Such attempts usually invoke an immediate response; from behind the barricades comes a fusillade of difficult questions for the would-be evaluators. How do you measure teaching quality? What are the criteria of educational productivity?

At the Open University such evaluative studies were made in 1976/77 of each of the six academic schools. We were involved as members of all six investigative teams and with us on each group were three different members of staff from schools other than that being studied. This paper describes the experience we had and the methods we used, and tries to identify the successes and failures of our studies, as far as we can see these at present.

However, before we can talk about the studies, we must give you some background information about the Open University. It provides part-time home-based study for some 50,000 adults throughout the United Kingdom, leading to the award of general or honours degrees. Credits on six courses are necessary to obtain a general degree, eight credits qualify you for an honours degree. Teaching is largely by correspondence, using specially prepared teaching texts. Most courses have audio-visual components such as TV, radio programs, cassettes or records, and a small amount of local face-to-face tuition. Some courses have specially developed kits for use in scientific experiments. Each course is expected to involve the student in about 10-12 hours work for some 32 weeks.

Fig. 1

The Open University Package of Course Materials

Producer	Product	Dissemination to Student
Central faculty staff	Weekly correspondence texts	Mail
	Specially edited articles	"
	Experimental Kits	"
	Assignments	Mail & Computer terminals
	Examinations	At local examination centres
BBC & Faculty	T.V. programs	National Broadcasting
	Radio programs	" "
	Broadcast study notes	Mail
Regionally based faculty staff	Tutorial help	Mail and local study centres
	Counselling	At local study centres
Central and Regional Staff	Summer Schools	At selected University Campuses

An important to note is that unlike most traditional university courses, an Open University course is for the most part a tangible product, a package of materials produced by the academic staff. Another point is that they are very expensive. The development cost of a new course is in the region of £ ½ to 1 million, and on top of this there are the costs of distributing and presenting the course to the students in each year of its life. Each course is developed over a period of 2-3 years by a team of academic members BBC producers and support staff such as a graphic designer, an editor and an educational technologist.[1] Some teams also buy in contributions from the academic staff of other institutions of higher education.

Fig. 2 The tasks of the Course Team in developing a new course

Stages of Work	Rough time scale
1. Pulling together a team committed to develop the course	½ year
2. Choice of target students Formulation of syllabus Selection of media Gaining administrative approval and budget for development	½-1 year
3. Drafting materials Discussing drafts in the team Developmental testing of drafts	1 year
4. Revision of drafts and editing Designing final formats Drafting assessment material Designing tutorial support	½ year
5. Supervising production and distribution of course materials to students	½ year plus the life of the course

There were several inter-related reasons why the Open University's six Schools all agreed that there should be a review of their methods of developing new packages of course materials. There was some concern to find ways of saving time and money, especially if these savings could be used to boost the resources for research which had suffered in the rush to build up a strong teaching program. Just as important however, were educational and political factors.

Generally speaking, the academic staff of the Open University are proud of the reputation which their courses have achieved in the world of higher education, but after 6-8 years of course development, there were genuine worries that experience was not being sufficiently shared within

or between schools. Few of us were willing to claim that the quality of courses was very much higher than it was at the beginning and there had been no improvement in the rates at which students passed courses. Many staff felt that the mix of course components and the style of teaching ought to be reviewed as the University moved into a period when the courses first produced were being remade. Some saw a need for a more flexible approach to course design, particularly for higher level courses which attracted relatively low student numbers. We feel that this impetus for pedagogic review was a major factor in allowing studies to be started with the goodwill of most faculty staff.

On the other hand, however much we were able to justify the educational function of these studies, there was no doubt that we were also entering a very sensitive political area. The reason for this was not just that any criticisms made would be hotly contested but that in the Open University the allocation of resources, particularly academic staff posts, is largely dependant on the productivity of the schools. This productivity is measured by the number of courses produced per member of faculty staff (student enrolments or success rates on the courses are not included in the measure).

The rates used for the allocation of staff allow a lower productivity for some schools, such as Science, than for others such as Arts. Consequently some schools are allowed to have far more staff than other schools, which are expected to design and run just as many courses.

This method of allocating staff posts between the schools had only been agreed by faculty after lengthy discussions and there was little doubt that the schools with the lower productivity were hoping that our studies

would provide some justification of this level, while those with the higher rates of producing courses were hoping that this justification would disappear or at least be seriously questioned. This sounds very academic but we should point out that in the past this has been an emotionally charged issue. There was a belief that same staff spent too much time on research and hence had a low productivity, and the contrary view held that high productivity was the result of journalistic hackwork.

Some people regarded the exercises as another device to procrastinate on a decision to review the productivity rates, or to delay a decision on a major change in the way courses were produced. Another view was that the studies were a ruse to allow senior academic staff to find out the feelings of their junior colleagues without incurring any personal difficulties. We mention these background feelings because it is useful to realise that this was not a clean cut research project. We were engaged in a confused combination of fact finding, work study measurement, exercising political judgement and provoking thought and action.

From a theoretical standpoint what was required was a study of how time was spent, how money was spent, what methods were employed in developing courses and what sort of products emerged. Given this information, all three of the underlying aims could be served: there could be a sharing of ideas for changes that might save time or money, and of new ways of developing courses that were of a higher quality from the student's point of view, and the justification for the current productivity rates of the schools could be reconsidered.

Such a traditional fact-finding exercise was what was expected of us and indeed we began to plan our work in terms of a series of questionnaire

surveys to a sample of course team members. However, before we had launched a single pilot questionnaire, we began to realise that this approach would have serious problems. It probably would have been possible to review where the money was going, but data on the use made of staff time, which is the more important element, would be very problematical. Is an academic working on course production or on research when he reads up the latest articles on his subject? Is he working when musing in the bath, or chatting up potential consultants at a party? Is time spent sitting in a course development meeting counted, when the main product is a week's shopping list or a letter to his mother? There would also have been considerable difficulty in allocating time between the different tasks of course design. In developing the equipment for a T.V. program, the team may have also done the donkey-work for the design of their home experiment kit; whereas in arranging the studio discussion for another program, the team may have alienated a suitable consultant author, so necessitating a lengthy search for a replacement to work on a crucial part of the course. Indeed, this replacement's work may inevitably miss the planned deadline, and the resulting delays may add to the work of other members of the team.

Could people remember how they spent their time over the two-three years of course production? Diary exercises might be better than questionnaires but we judged it unlikely that enough staff would co-operate in keeping diaries of a sufficiently detailed kind to be useful. Documentary evidence, such as course team minutes and schedules and dated working papers could provide some evidence on when jobs were allocated and when completed, but would not tell us what proportion of the time between those dates was actually spent on the job.

There have been several attempts to suggest typical stages in our course design in the different Schools, and we did try to pilot a small survey

ourselves, but we remain overwhelmed by the problems of definition. Perhaps we're born cynics too, but one of us recalls how she reacted when one of our interviewers tried to survey her use of time; she felt defensive and torn between a desire to appear virtuous and the urge to be honest and to confess her horrible habits. She doesn't think that she would have done much better if she'd been asked to keep a diary of her work, either, she'd just have had more chance to think up a coherent story of hardworking efficiency!

A second major reason for rejecting a safe respectable survey, was that it would not have been safe at all. Work-study has a bad reputation with us after what many people thought was a ham-fisted application to our clerical staff a couple of years ago. Work-study of academic staff is total anathema, at our university we have given up our beloved right to teach in private, securely hidden from our colleagues' eyes in panelled lecture halls, but we will fight for 'academic freedom' to the end!

A rather different but equally serious problem was the question of how information on where resources were spent could be interpreted. If course team A takes 10 man-weeks to prepare a television programme while team B spends only a single week, can one conclude that team A needs to pull up its socks? Even if one assumes that the data is sufficiently sound to be acceptable, should we assume that the resource input is comparable? It may be that team A is staffed with inexperienced nincompoops, while team B is formed of the cream of the faculty. Then are the products, two television programmes, comparable? It may be that programme A is an outstanding achievement, destined for prizes and glory, while programme B will be a sad little affair, and will be quietly remade at an early date at extra expense. There are no readily agreed criteria for judging the educational quality of our course materials. And again, can we really compare the processes of producing two ostensibly similar items of course

material? Two equally experienced teams may produce two equally excellent text books but if the proofs for one are lost in the printers, that team may take twice as long to complete the task as the other more fortunate group.

By this stage in our thinking, we were clear that we should not be attempting any kind of formal work-study investigations. It was only a short step on from there to see that no-one could be expected to record in writing the whole truth about how things were done at present and their frustrations with this. We also suspected that there might be clues to new approaches in people's minds which they could not reveal clearly in response to simple questions. We were now moving away from a survey of faculty's opinions[1], towards the newer ethnographic approach to institutional research.[2]

Ethnographers work like anthropologists, immersing themselves in a situation, joining in the day-to-day work, observing and listening in depth. Their concerns are to try to free themselves from any preconceptions about the situation they are studying and to try to reduce the effects of being researched to a minimum, to study the natural situation. Their aim is to understand in a deep sense. An ethnographic approach to our studies would have involved us in joining a few course teams, perhaps for two or three years, watching and listening and reading all the team papers, with continual attempts to analyse what the teams really seemed to be trying to do and how they were being constrained. We might have still asked for diaries of where the time was going and would have arranged occasional conversations with the teams where we could have checked out our interpretations. With this approach we would not need to become associated with the work-study fears as we could carry out our review unobtrusively. Problems of interpretation would also be eased, as we would no longer be trying to force an

inherently complex situation into an over-simple mould.

However, this approach also had problems, quite apart from its relative slowness. It would have been unfamiliar to us, the investigators, and there were few people in the university who could help us learn this very different way of working. It would have been strongly criticised by many faculty staff, reared on the more usual tradition which emphasises securing an adequate sample for representativeness and testing a limited number of hypotheses by asking tightly defined questions. Insofar as we did adopt an ethnographic approach, we were criticised on just these grounds, particularly by the Science School.

We also felt that it was very important that we consulted as wide a range of opinion in the university as possible, which the in-depth ethnographic approach would not allow. It seemed likely that good ideas and insightful criticisms would be spread very widely among all grades and kinds of staff. We were beginning to see that our studies could be effective tools of change themselves, if enough people were involved. We might be able to provoke just the discussion and rethinking of attitudes that was required, by the way in which we carried out our investigations. By this point we were considering our studies as a kind of action research. We began to see that providing information about how courses were produced was only a small step, that information could so easily be ignored or rejected. What we had to do was to get people talking, get them interested, get them committed to change.

The final form that our study took was a compromise. It was neither traditional survey research, nor was it an ethnographic study in depth. It was neither solely concerned to discover information, nor was it entirely oriented to action research. The compromise we chose was partly

determined by what we were trying to achieve, partly modified by what we felt the faculty could stomach, and partly constrained by our own investigative abilities.

The six Schools were only gradually persuaded to offer themselves for review, although all six eventually co-operated in a most generous manner. This fact led us to review each School in turn and as we only had a year for the whole study we were only able to devote a few weeks to each School. Such a brief study did not allow proper participatory observation and we were reduced to relying predominately on informal interviews to develop our understanding. These interviews were conducted by a team of five people for each school - three members of the academic staff borrowed from other Schools and ourselves. We developed a set of about 20 topics to focus on in our interviewing but we abandoned the idea of formal questionnaires.[3] With these question topics in hand the interviewer could encourage the interviewee to talk freely and fully about those aspects of course production in which he was most experienced or on which he held strong views. Not unexpectedly, most academics enjoyed explaining their good ideas at length and describing the problems that others caused them! We managed to conduct such conversations with about three-quarters of all centrally-based academic staff and a large number of support staff, that is about 200 interviews in all.

Each interviewer concentrated on a few course design teams that had either recently completed their work or were still working together. Some of the interviewers also managed to find the time to visit course design meetings and to collect and read working papers but as our aides were all volunteers with pressing committments from their normal jobs, we could not insist on such researches. In all we looked at the design of about nine courses in

each of the Schools, i.e. over 50 course design teams in all. We felt that this spread of interviewing was essential if no-one was to feel that they had been deliberately omitted and indeed a few academics complained that they had not been contacted for their views.

Each interviewer prepared his own interpretation of the way his particular courses had been designed, although some said that they saw themselves as mirrors, reflecting back the team's own perceptions. We would have preferred to have had two or three people to listen to each interview and to search out alternative interpretations of what was said, but this we could not afford. Most interviewers were able to check questions of fact with the teams concerned. Finally, the team of five built up an interpretation of the School's problems and potentials for changed practices, by discussing the separate course reports.

From an ethnographic point of view we had studied too large a sample too briefly and we had relied too much on a single source of data - the interviews. We can also be criticised strongly for our lack of care in checking our interpretations. However we had avoided most of the problems that we had predicted for traditional survey research.

We wrote our reports as the personal views of the reviewing teams and we pulled no punches.[4] Where we felt we had seen inefficent practices we said so, and we backed up our opinions wherever we could by pointing out where somemembers of the School agreed with our view.

We made our reports confidentially to each School in turn and the results in many cases were an initial uproar, especially over the reports on the individual courses, where individual staff were more easily identified. We were summoned to meetings with the dean or the whole School, we were

threatened with lawsuits, we were asked to withdraw one report and we were met with a considerable amount of personal abuse. While this was all most unpleasant it was not unexpected, it is a common reaction to ethnographic accounts. Subsequent events have supported our view that the creation of controversy was a valuable part of our study.

A common fate for the reports of working parties in our university is formal acceptance by a committee, an expression of gratitude for all the hard work done, and nothing more. We had shifted our aim towards that of changing attitudes and away from gathering information. By generating such controversy with our reports we ensured that they were both read and hotly discussed. We had made the communication of the results of our study part of the work, a piece of action research. Of course the recommendations in the reports had to be well argued and based on the reports of the individual courses, so that they could not be dismissed. We believe too that the controversial nature of our research methods and of how we worded our conclusions, acted as a valuable distractor. People were able to vent their anger and hurt in an acceptable way at having their usually private concerns laid bare and criticised. They could ridicule our inadequacies as researchers without having to reject the content of our recommendations. We were much comforted to be told we'd 'hit the nail on the head' in private after several such occasions.

For example one of our reports was the major focus for discussion at the School's usual biennial conference, at three School Committee meetings and two meetings of the whole School. This School produced a 19 page reply to our report in which they set out not only their hostility to our methods but also their reasons for rejecting only four of a possible 16 recommendations. They claimed, quite rightly, that we "employed an investigative method which did not prove very reliable. There are large

numbers of misconceptions - and... it is often impossible to distinguish between fact, opinion and gossip... "but they added," the questioning by (the review group) and the discussion with them helped to sharpen the awareness of Faculty members of many problems.." [5]

Overall it is hard to assess the effectiveness of our study, even now more than a year after the first report was completed. Many of the twenty investigators who had the opportunity of conducting the studies remarked that they had to revise their prejudices against those in other Schools. We suspect that for many of those interviewed, the chance to explore their frustrations with present ways of working and to feel that their ideas for changes were being taken seriously, may have been in some way therapeutic. Most important however has probably been that the interviews and the discussion of our suggestions and questions encouraged faculty staff to reconsider their current practices and to take responsibility for improving their own productivity. However, it is impossible to distinguish the role of our studies from the effects of other events at the University and certainly we shall never be able, nor want, to claim sole responsibility for a new attitude to course production.

Most Schools seem to be devoting more effort now to manpower planning and in one, where our report had been very critical of their haphazard organisation of course design work, a special residential conference of the whole School was called. At this conference they agreed on a major change in their approach to course design, which is now being implemented by means of various vetting and monitoring systems. These organisational changes may have the effect of reducing aggravation in teams and saving a little time, but we reported that significent financial savings depended on marked changes in pedagogy. We focussed attention on several changes

that were widely thought to be desirable such as a reduction in student workload and in the number of different components sent out as course materials. and there does seem to be a movement in this direction.

There has been some sharing of good ideas within Schools but not much between them, as we made our reports in confidence to each School. However there does seem to be an increased concern to learn more of practices in other Schools and a determination to share experience more effectively within some Schools. For example, in one School, our report was followed by the formation of a group of staff whose job was seen as gathering and sharing information on various teaching practices and they are now running a changing display board for this information, have begun a series of seminars, and are producing a series of written summary notes on different aspects of good teaching practice.

The studies of the six Schools were followed by reviews of the work of other parts of the University, including the graphic design studio and the computing service. These reviews used a somewhat similar approach to our studies of the Schools but seem to have been less successful. They have been thought to have found fewer ideas for improved practices and to have been more careful in presenting reports, perhaps because individuals were so readily indentifiable. The reports of these reviews were also criticised for presenting too firm recommendations without the background evidence for their assertions and our studies of the Schools were praised in contrast.

> "The virtue of the reports of the Faculty Methods Review Groups had been that, in presenting the evidence for their assertions, the faculties had been enabled to consider the background to the reports, and had been

led to consider and evaluate methods of working which went far beyond the relatively superficial nature of the original reports themselves. This process had been extremely valuable. It was pointed out, however, that the Faculty Reviews were different on two counts. In the first place, faculties had more opportunity for decision making and so were more able to react constructively to recommendations in the Reports. In this context, it was noted that much had been done by the Faculties themselves in response to the reports, (whilst none of the faculty reports had yet come to Planning Board.) Secondly, one purpose of the Faculty Reviews was to assist in sharing the experiences and methods of the faculties amoungst themselves - an activity that was not relevant to the more recent Methods Review Groups". 6

We conclude that it is certainly possible to conduct a study of the efficiency of faculty staff but that the effectiveness of such a review is very dependant on how it is conducted. We are convinced that a hard-data information-collection exercise, followed by firm recommendations, would have been disastrous, while the use of more ethnographic methods allowed us to draw on staff's inside knowledge of their own jobs and encouraged them to feel concerned about improving their own productivity. We hope that this account will encourage others to consider ethnography as an alternative when they are faced with complex intractable problems among a sophisticated group of staff, but that they will apply it better than we did. However, we suspect that the very debatable quality of our "research" methods may have deflected much of the hostility to the content of our reports. Very tentatively, we offer the final suggestion that there are occasions when institutional research may be more effective it if appears to generate heat rather than light!

Judith Riley

1. Further details about the operation of the British Open University are available in the form of a package of course materials: The Open University of the United Kingdom : a short course, prepared by the Open University Centre for International Co-operation and Services, 1977.

2. We are indebted for much help in learning about ethnography to Martyn Hammersley, who has recently reviewed this approach for an Open University course: Research Methods in Education and the Social Sciences, Open University, 1978.

3. In the interviews the investigators recorded points on a set of 23 cards, each of which have just a few words as a prompt for conversation. Before starting work the investigators studied a list of more detailed questions.

4. The six reports were published internally: Methods Review Group: Interim Reports, 2, 1977, and they remain confidential to the School concerned.

5. Comments from the Faculty on the Report of the Methods Review Group, the Science Faculty, March 1978.

6. Minutes of the Open University Planning Board, February 1978.

Appendix:

Questions studied by investigators before interviewing

What was produced? How many? What kind? How lengthy?

What are the interviewee's opinions' about the course components?

What hindsight, are all these components worthwhile producing?

How could they have been improved?

Would you like incentives to reduce the number of teaching media?

What do you think about the quality of the course as:

- sound academic treatment of material?

- effective for teaching at a distance?

What are your criteria for success on your course?

Which tasks were done? How were they done? Anything atypical, unique? In what sequence were things done?

Early planning - formal written decisions or a period of discussion? How seriously done? Including teaching strategy? How integrated had the units to be, one with another? Was the Course Team Chariman's Handbook used?

Writing, reading and commenting on drafts - how many drafts and how do they differ from each other, who reads and comments on which drafts, and in how much detail. Any specialisation of labour? Problems with sequential nature of material or with pre-requisites?
Would it be helpful to have a model of course preparation, setting out the stages at which decisions have to be taken?

Developmental testing - did you use students? How many units were tested, all parts of them? To what degree of detail, did you meet your testers or use questionnaires? How were they briefed and rewarded?

Broadcasts - how far are these seen as BBC responsibility? How far integrated with the course?

Other audio visual material - any particular reasons why they were chosen?

Set books, readers and articles - how were these selected and prepared and used/role in course?

Course guide and other special publications - when was it written, how long is it?

Design work - standard job or any extras eg. folder of loose material, special maps....?

Library staff - extensive use of Liaison Librarians on picture searches etc?

Meetings - workshops, decision making or broad discussions? How often held how long lasting, formal agendas, written papers, chairing and minutes? Any use of handwritten material or phone calls or informal meetings? How far did the members really work as a team?

Tutorial provision - how did you decide how tutorial time should be deployed? Day schools or evening tutorials? Involvement of regional staff?

Home experiment Kit - how was it decided to have a HEK? What to include? How to use it in the course?

Summer schools - what type of work involved in organising the summer school? How much written material prepared? Whose responsibility?

Assessment - what sort of CMAs and TMAs and exam questions and how long were tutor notes, model answers or marking criteria? Any student notes? Any project notes?

Maintenance - were TMA and CMA assessment questions rewritten? How much correspondence with students and tutors? Do you arrange and attend Day Schools and Summer Schools? How is monitoring arranged? How should maintenance be organised in the faculty?

With hindsight, do you view all these tasks as worthwhile undertaking?

Could any have been done with less effort?

Would more specialisation of labour in the team have helped?

Would more individual responsibility for components have helped? Less course team discussion?

What is the ideal length of time to prepare a course (number of years and dates).

Would you expect a remake of this course to take as long as the original preparation?

In what ways could any of the services to the Faculty have helped you to produce this course with less effort eg. project control, editors, BBC, designers, IET, DP?

Who worked on any products or tasks? Probe use of consultants, research fellows/research assistants, course assistants, regional staff.

What would be the ideal size of a course team?

Was there a core team at all meetings?

Is this a good idea?

How did changes in personnel effect the work?

How was the team affected by its committments to work other than producing this course?

How experienced was this team - in subject/in teaching/in OU?

Does this matter?

Should new staff be trained in course production?

What are the interviewee's opinions about the future of course production at the Open University?

Based on the experience gained is there anything which the interviewee would advocate for the Faculty or the University for the future, which would improve effectiveness?

What might be the effect on the course production system of:

Short vocational courses (Continuing Education).

Lower educational qualifications of student intake.

Reduced resources in University, and low resource courses in particular, based, say, on a single set book.

Concentration on remake, evaluation and maintenance instead of initiation of courses.

BBC on site.

Large numbers of associate students.

Any others he wants to mention?

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Does this matter?

Should new staff be trained in course production?

What are the interviewee's opinions about the future of course production at the Open University?

Based on the experience gained is there anything which the interviewee would advocate for the Faculty or the University for the future, which would improve effectiveness?

What might be the effect on the course production system of:

Short vocational courses (Continuing Education).

Lower educational qualifications of student intake.

Reduced resources in University, and low resource courses in particular, based, say, on a single set book.

Concentration on remake, evaluation and maintenance instead of initiation of courses.

BBC on site.

Large numbers of associate students.

Any others he wants to mention?

Appendix:

Questions studied by investigators before interviewing

What was produced? How many? What kind? How lengthy?

What are the interviewee's opinions' about the course components?

What hindsight, are all these components worthwhile producing?

How could they have been improved?

Would you like incentives to reduce the number of teaching media?

What do you think about the quality of the course as:

- sound academic treatment of material?
- effective for teaching at a distance?

What are your criteria for success on your course?

Which tasks were done? How were they done? Anything atypical, unique? In what sequence were things done?

Early planning - formal written decisions or a period of discussion? How seriously done? Including teaching strategy? How integrated had the units to be, one with another? Was the Course Team Chariman's Handbook used?

Writing, reading and commenting on drafts - how many drafts and how do they differ from each other, who reads and comments on which drafts, and in how much detail. Any specialisation of labour? Problems with sequential nature of material or with pre-requisites?
Would it be helpful to have a model of course preparation, setting out the stages at which decisions have to be taken?

Developmental testing - did you use students? How many units were tested, all parts of them? To what degree of detail, did you meet your testers or use questionnaires? How were they briefed and rewarded?

Broadcasts - how far are these seen as BBC responsibility? How far integrated with the course?

Other audio visual material - any particular reasons why they were chosen?

Set books, readers and articles - how were these selected and prepared and used/role in course?

Course guide and other special publications - when was it written, how long is it?

Design work - standard job or any extras eg. folder of loose material, special maps....?

Library staff - extensive use of Liaison Librarians on picture searches etc?

Meetings - workshops, decision making or broad discussions? How often held how long lasting, formal agendas, written papers, chairing and minutes? Any use of handwritten material or phone calls or informal meetings? How far did the members really work as a team?

Tutorial provision - how did you decide how tutorial time should be deployed? Day schools or evening tutorials? Involvement of regional staff?

Home experiment Kit - how was it decided to have a HEK? What to include? How to use it in the course?

Summer schools - what type of work involved in organising the summer school? How much written material prepared? Whose responsibility?

Assessment - what sort of CMAs and TMAs and exam questions and how long were tutor notes, model answers or marking criteria? Any student notes? Any project notes?

Maintenance - were TMA and CMA assessment questions rewritten? How much correspondence with students and tutors? Do you arrange and attend Day Schools and Summer Schools? How is monitoring arranged? How should maintenance be organised in the faculty?

With hindsight, do you view all these tasks as worthwhile undertaking?

Could any have been done with less effort?

Would more specialisation of labour in the team have helped?

Would more individual responsibility for components have helped? Less course team discussion?

What is the ideal length of time to prepare a course (number of years and dates).

Would you expect a remake of this course to take as long as the original preparation?

In what ways could any of the services to the Faculty have helped you to produce this course with less effort eg. project control, editors, BBC, designers, IET, DP?

Who worked on any products or tasks? Probe use of consultants, research fellows/research assistants, course assistants, regional staff.

What would be the ideal size of a course team?

Was there a core team at all meetings?

Is this a good idea?

How did changes in personnel effect the work?

How was the team affected by its committments to work other than producing this course?

How experienced was this team - in subject/in teaching/in OU? 26

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